

HBCU Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Initiative

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Delta Regional Authority

Mississippi Valley State University

Allen Entrepreneurial Institute

INTRODUCTION

The Delta Regional Authority (DRA), Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU), and Allen Entrepreneurial Institute (AEI) are seeking applications from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) within the [DRA footprint](#) to participate in a Delta HBCU Ecosystem Initiative. The Delta region is comprised of 252 counties and parishes in AL, AR, IL, KY, LA, MO, MS, and TN. This opportunity will identify the entrepreneurial resources for potential and current entrepreneurs in HBCU communities, both physical and digital. The selected institutions will be working with the partners to identify entrepreneurial resources, including the identification of strengths and weaknesses of the ecosystem, and strategically plan to build and enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem in their communities.

In addition to the strategic plans, selected campuses will have a two-day rapid acceleration process for students that are interested in starting a business. These students will go through business consultation, pitch development, and mentorship to launch their businesses.

The intent of the project is to enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem on HBCU campuses, promote entrepreneurship, and prepare student entrepreneurs the eight-state region. This project will align with the [Small Business and Entrepreneurship Policy Framework \(SBE Framework\)](#). Topic areas should include, but are not limited to:

- Developing a pipeline of educated and skilled entrepreneurs;
- Cultivating technology exchange and innovation;
- Improving access to capital;
- Promoting awareness and advancing market opportunities; and
- Optimizing the regulatory environment.

All costs of preparation of responses to this Request for Applications are the sole responsibility of responders and DRA, MVSU, and AEI will not be obligated to reimburse any of such costs.

The deadline for submittal of applications is 5:00 PM, Central Time, May 30, 2016.

DETAILS OF REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

BACKGROUND OF PARTNERS

The Delta Regional Authority works to improve regional economic opportunity by helping to create jobs, build communities, and improve the lives of the 10 million people who reside in the [252 counties and parishes](#) of the eight-state Delta region. Led by the [Delta Regional Authority Board](#), comprised of the Federal Co-Chairman, appointed by the President and confirmed by the U.S. Senate, and the governors of the eight states, the Delta Regional Authority fosters local and regional partnerships that address economic and social challenges to ultimately strengthen the Delta economy and the quality of life for Delta residents.

Established in 2000 by Congress, the Delta Regional Authority makes strategic investments of federal appropriations into the physical and human infrastructure of Delta communities. The Delta Regional Authority supports job creation and economic development through innovative approaches to growing local and regional leadership, increasing access to quality healthcare, and boosting opportunities for entrepreneurs to obtain affordable capital.

The 252 counties and parishes served by the Delta Regional Authority make up some of the most distressed areas of the country.

The Allen Entrepreneurial Institute's Mission is to increase the number and size of minority and women owned businesses in the United States and Globally

Founded in 2000, The Allen Entrepreneurial Institute sits on 140 acres of pristine natural resources complimented by lavish and expansive facilities, which inspire students who visit our campus to become business leaders. The Allen Entrepreneurial Institute provides entrepreneurial training and leadership development for middle / high school students, college students, and entrepreneurs. AEI has impacted thousands of students through its programs and inspired numerous minority entrepreneurs. Currently AEI is implementing the Business and Money Matters (B.a.M.M.) educational system. The system blends classroom learning, multi-media resources, technology-based learning applications, and experiential learning to provide high school and college students with applied entrepreneurial learning experiences.

Mississippi Valley State University, as a Carnegie Classified Master's University, provides comprehensive undergraduate and graduate programs in education, the arts and sciences, and professional studies. The University is driven by its commitment to excellence in teaching, learning, service, and research--a commitment resulting in a learner-centered environment that prepares critical thinkers, exceptional communicators, and service-oriented, engaged, and productive citizens. MVSU is fundamentally committed to positively impacting the quality of life and creating extraordinary educational opportunities for the Mississippi Delta and beyond.

PURPOSE OF REQUEST FOR APPLICATION

DRA invites applications from qualified educational institutions to:

- A. Complete the application format, and
- B. Once selected, prepare a strategic plan with partner organizations to grow the entrepreneurial ecosystem and host student accelerator seminars.

Responding entities should be able to show their interest in expanding their entrepreneurship ecosystems and prior commitment and interest to entrepreneurship and/or business development with students.

OUTCOMES OF HBCU ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM INITIATIVE

The DRA HBCU Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Initiative (EEI) aims to be a resource to provide a foundation for building the entrepreneurial ecosystem on HBCU college campuses, strengthen current programs, create collaboration between HBCU campuses, and give student entrepreneurs the skills needed to pursue business endeavors.

DRA RESPONSIBILITIES

DRA staff will provide the entity with all relevant information it has pertaining to entrepreneurship in the region, including prior studies, existing assets and resources, ongoing efforts in the field, and appropriate contacts for interviews.

MVSU and AEI staff will provide the entity with meeting coordination, strategic planning guidance, planning of all training events, provide student technical assistance, and provide founder training for selected student entrepreneurs.

APPLICATION FORMAT

The Proposal should include the information requested below:

- Detailed cover letter summarizing the current work of the entity in business and entrepreneurship **AND** desire to build or enhance their current entrepreneurial ecosystem;
- Description of the Project Team. The names, title and qualifications (resumes) of the proposed support staff who will be taking the on-campus lead for this assignment, including their experience and relevant projects in which they had “hands on” responsibility;
- Letters (2) of support from institution Presidents/Chancellors and Business or relevant Division Chairs; and
- Lists of potential community partners, letters of support from those organizations are encouraged.

The length of the Proposal is at the discretion of the entity but it should be readable by a range of stakeholders.

SCHEDULE OF SELECTION

The following is an outline of the selection procedure and a tentative time schedule:

Release RFA: April 27, 2016

Deadline for submission of application: May 30, 2016, 5:00 PM CST

Review of application, candidate interviews and clarification discussions: June 6-17, 2016

Entities Announced: June 20, 2016

Note-Selected entities will be encouraged to send a representative to AEI for the HBCU Summer Accelerator in Atlanta, GA July 13-16, 2016.

All dates above are approximate and may be extended or revised by DRA.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Applicant HBCUs within the 252 counties of the DRA footprint will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Prior work with building the entrepreneurial ecosystem on campus;
- Expressed interest in building and developing the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the HBCU community and community at large;
- Background and experience in projects similar;
- Staff expertise and overall experience of personnel assigned to the work;
- Responsiveness to requirements of the project; and
- Such other factors as DRA shall determine.

The stated criteria may be supplemented, weighted or revised at the sole discretion of DRA.

DISCRETION AND LIABILITY WAIVER

DRA reserves the right to reject all applications or to request and obtain, from one or more of the entities, supplementary information as may be necessary for DRA, MVSU, and AEI to analyze the application pursuant to the entity selection criteria listed above.

The entity, by submitting a response to this RFA, waives all right to protest or seek any legal remedies whatsoever regarding any aspect of this RFA.

CONTACTS

Direct all questions regarding this project to:

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12. DIRECTIONS FOR DELIVERY OF THE PROPOSAL

Proposals, all attachments and exhibits, shall be emailed to the attention of Von Nkosi at info@ili360.org or von@ili360.org and received no later than 5:00 PM, Central Time on May 30, 2016:

All proposals must be clearly identified in the subject line of the email: “HBCU Ecosystem Initiative.” Please request a “Read Receipt” when submitting the Proposal.